

After crossing Three Mile Stream, the track climbs steadily to Kiwi Saddle through forest dominated by tall red beech/tawhairaunui. Just before the summit there is a short 2-minute side track to a lookout across the lake, well worth a photo stop.

From the saddle descend to the swampy grasslands of Kiwi valley. Follow the track on your left to avoid the bogs and then pick up a 4WD track on the true right of Kiwi River across the open grasslands to Hope Kiwi Lodge (20 bunks).

### Hope Kiwi Lodge to Lewis Pass Highway

*Time: 5–6 hours one way*

Follow the poled route from Hope Kiwi Lodge along the forest edge to the Hope River swing bridge, about 30 minutes from the hut. For 1 hour or so below the swing bridge, the track wanders down the broad grassy flats until eroded riverbanks mean a return to the forest. The third time the track leaves the river it climbs the bank to Hope Halfway Hut (note the fireplace has been removed).

After Hope Halfway Hut the track keeps to the beech forest for 2–3 hours on terraces high above the riverbed. At the forest edge, a vehicle track descends down through mānuka and tussock to the swing bridge over the Boyle River gorge. Amuri Area School Outdoor Education Centre is located here and the shelter and car park is 5 minutes down the shingle road at Windy Point, just off Lewis Pass Highway.

### Lake Kaurapataka side trip or round trip

*Time: 6–7 hours or 1–2 days return*

Start as for the Harper Pass Route and follow the Taramakau track from the shelter as far as the signposted turn-off at Pfeifer Creek. Follow the streambed of Pfeifer Creek for about 100 metres to the start of the track on the true right. The track passes through attractive red beech forest to the confluence of Pfeifer Creek and the stream draining Lake Kaurapataka. It crosses the stream and continues up the true left to the lake. The return trip from Aickens to the lake via this route can be done in a day. There are several good campsites along the lake edge. Cairns mark where to leave the track to the campsites.

To do a 1–2 hour loop walk, continue on the track to the Otehake River around to the head of the lake, up a short climb to the saddle between the lake and the river. From here the track drops steeply into the Otehake and another good campsite. The route down the Otehake is mostly on the true right, boulder hopping beside the river, crossing where necessary. This is not possible in rain or if rivers are high. Cross the Otehake again just above where it joins the Taramakau and then walk down the river flats back to Otira River. The loop walk can be undertaken in a long day or as an overnight stay.

### Huts

**Kiwi Hut:** Standard, 8 bunks, mattresses

**Locke Stream Hut:** Standard, 18 bunks, mattresses

**Harper Pass Bivvy:** Basic, 2 bunks, mattresses

**Camerons Hut:** Basic, 4 bunks, (no mattresses)

**Hurunui No 3 Hut:** Standard, 16 bunks, mattresses

**Hurunui Hut:** Standard, 15 bunks, mattresses

**Hope Kiwi Lodge:** Serviced, 20 bunks, mattresses

**Hope Halfway Hut:** Basic, 6 bunks, mattresses

### Hut fees

Serviced huts: Adult \$15 per night, youth (11–17 years)

\$7.50 per night, child (up to 10 years) free

Standard huts: Adult \$5 per night, youth (11–17 years)

\$2.50 per night, child (up to 10 years) free

Basic huts: Free

*Purchase hut tickets or passes before you leave from any DOC office or selected i-SITES.*

### Further information

For information, maps, weather forecasts and track condition updates:

**Arthur's Pass National Park Visitor Centre**

SH73, Arthur's Pass

Phone 03 318 9211

8.00 am – 5.00 pm (summer), 8.30 am – 4.30 pm (winter)

[arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz)

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

Cover: Hurunui River North Branch. *Photo: Pete Brady*

*Published by:*  
Department of Conservation  
Rangiora Office  
PO Box 349, Rangiora 7440  
New Zealand  
May 2015

*Editing and design:*  
Publishing Team, DOC National Office

**DOC HOTline**  
**0800 362 468**  
Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

**New Zealand Government**

## ROUTE GUIDE



# Harper Pass

Arthur's Pass National Park  
to Lake Sumner Forest Park



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## Summary

**Time:** 4–5 days (shuttle required)

**Grade:** Tramping track

**Experience:** Suitable for well-equipped people with previous backcountry tramping and river-crossing experience

**Best season:** Summer, autumn and winter

**Required maps:** NZTopo50 Moana BU20, Haupiri BU21, Lake Sumner BU22, Boyle BU23

**Hazards:** Flooded rivers, steep drop-offs

**Note:** True left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

**Safety:** This route guide must be read in conjunction with *Tramping in Arthur's Pass National Park*, a free brochure with important safety information, and New Zealand's *Outdoor Safety Code*. Before setting out, check the latest track conditions and avalanche advisory with the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.



Your safety is your responsibility. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

- 1. Plan your trip properly** – Ensure that you have a capable leader.
- 2. Tell someone** – Leave your trip details with a trusted contact and at [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz).
- 3. Check the weather** – Including [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) and the latest information on hazards and facilities before you start.
- 4. Know your limits** – Physical fitness and good equipment will make all the difference.
- 5. Take sufficient supplies** – Carry a sleeping bag, cooking utensils, sufficient food, raincoat, overtrousers, gloves, hat, and several layers of warm clothes.

## Follow the historic route from west to east

This guide describes the Harper Pass route from west to east. River-crossing skills are essential. Harper Pass was the main pathway to and from the West Coast for Māori when trading pounamu (greenstone). It continued to be an important route during the gold rush in 1864–65.

It is best to start the trip from the west as fine weather is required when crossing the Otira, Otehahe and Taramakau rivers. These rivers can rise quickly during rain, and you are advised not to attempt any river crossings while river levels are high. The eastern side is easier because all major rivers are

bridged and good forest tracks make tramping possible even in unpleasant conditions.

## Getting there

This trip starts at Aickens car park beside SH73, 5 km west of Otira township. To access the Taramakau valley, you need to cross Otira River. ***If the Otira River is not easy to cross, postpone your tramp until another day as crossing the Otehahe and Taramakau rivers further upstream will be impossible.***

The trip finishes at the shelter and car park at Windy Point, just off Lewis Pass Highway on SH7.

## Aickens to Kiwi Hut to Locke Stream Hut

**Time:** 6 hours one way

*Parties travelling from the east and finding themselves stuck on the far side of the Otira can use an emergency flood track, adding 2 hours to the tramp. This marked route starts upstream and takes you to the Morrison footbridge at the confluence of the Otira and Deception rivers. In extreme weather conditions this route can also be cut off by flooded sections. Do not use the emergency flood track to start your tramp as there are many river crossings further up the Taramakau valley.*

If Otira River is safe to cross, start from the Aickens car park, cross the stile and follow the fence line to the river. After crossing the Otira, make for the end of the band of tall trees immediately opposite (marked by an orange triangle).

A track leads through scrub and gorse to grassy flats. Continue walking along these grassy flats past Pfeifer Creek and the signposted turn-off to Lake Kaurapataka. Stay on the true left bank and cross Otehahe River and then, further upstream, cross the Taramakau to its true right at the safest place to cross.

Continue along the true right for about a kilometre above the Otehahe where a sign will indicate the short side-track to Kiwi Hut (8 bunks).

Upstream from Kiwi Hut remain on the true right. Towards Locke Stream the riverbed begins to narrow and eroded banks on the true right become steeper. Cross to the true left just downstream of the Taramakau/Locke Stream confluence and continue on over Locke Stream where you will locate a short track leading through the forest to Locke Stream Hut (18 bunks).

## Locke Stream Hut to Hurunui No 3 Hut

**Time:** 6–7 hours one way

Above Locke Stream Hut the track travels along the true left, at times in the forest and at times along the riverbed. The swing bridge is about 1 hour from Locke Stream Hut. Cross the bridge to the true right of the river, where again the track travels

through forest and riverbed.

Eventually the track leaves the river and begins to climb towards the pass. The track is steep and rough in places. As forest gives way to alpine scrub and tussock, the gradient eases. A sign marking the summit of the pass is reached in 3 hours.

The track drops fairly quickly on the eastern side of the pass into the headwaters of Hurunui River. After 30 minutes you will reach the two-person Harper Pass Bivvy (2 bunks), which is attractively sited in a grove of ribbonwood/mānātu above the stream on the true right.

Below Harper Pass Bivvy walking becomes a lot easier as the track drops down through beech/tawhai forest. As the valley opens, the track emerges onto river flats, with Camerons Hut standing out from the edge of the forest. (From Harper Pass Bivvy to Camerons Hut is 2 hours.) Camerons Hut (4 bunks) is showing its age.

Cameron Stream has an emergency walk-wire 100 metres up from the Hurunui riverbed. From here the track returns to the forest and keeps just within the fringes until it emerges again on river flats at Hurunui No 3 Hut (16 bunks).

## Hurunui No 3 Hut to Hurunui Hut

**Time:** 4 hours one way

Below Hurunui No 3 Hut, the track follows easy grassy flats across the valley floor. The track keeps to the true right, at times on the flats or in the forest. The forest sections sidle up and down the hillside to bypass places where the river cuts in against the bank.

The highlight of this part of the journey is the hot spring about 2 hours walk from Hurunui No 3 Hut. This spring flows from the rock about 30 metres above the bed of the Hurunui River and sends sulphurous waters down an open scar in the forest. The track crosses the scar below the spring. A small pool has been formed at the spring. Keep an eye out for the turn-off as it is easy to miss.

From the hot springs, the track returns to river flats, then sidles up through mānuka forest to Hurunui Hut (15 bunks), sited well up the hillside.

## Hurunui Hut to Hope Kiwi Lodge

**Time:** 6 hours one way

From Hurunui Hut the track descends to the swing bridge across Hurunui River.

Cross the bridge and take the 4WD track to the forest edge on the far side of the matagouri flats. Continue along the forest edge to where the track heads into forest at the headwaters of Lake Sumner. After a short return to grassy flats, the track enters the forest again and begins to climb easily to Three Mile Stream.